

Jenny, PiAP:

Welcome to a segment of In This Moment Stories, from the University of North Carolina Partnerships in Aging Program. On May 28th, 2020, we spoke with Lisa who's 56 years old and lives in Greensboro, North Carolina. At this point, we were in the midst of stay at home orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lisa is deaf and she provided her responses to our questions in writing, but she asked that we find someone else to voice her answers so that they would be available in audio recording. That's what you'll hear here, which was recorded in late June, 2020. Lisa, we're curious about how you're experiencing the COVID pandemic. What, how are you managing during this time?

Lisa (proxy):

I never predicted this pandemic could change my life and the society. I work from home now, and it's not fun because I miss the interaction of my coworkers and my clients. Everything seems closed down. For instance, schools, malls, gym, and entertainment outlets. So therefore there's nothing to go out for. I just moved to Greensboro last April, and I could not explore Greensboro. However, I felt that it did slow down society and it feels more calm and more focused on self-awareness. I know when the society opens up, everybody will go back to work and school and all things will never go back to normal. Sometimes I feel so stuck. I was supposed to go to Morganton for a deaf expo and to Boston for a convention. And of course they were canceled. I cannot plan a vacation or go out of town trips since I do not know where things will stand. One thing I have learned is Zoom. It is useful to meet with my coworkers and my clients. Before the pandemic, I never used Zoom. And now I use Zoom to be able to work from home.

Jenny, PiAP:

It seems like Zoom has entered all our lives. I'm curious how anything in your life up until this point has prepared you or influenced how you think about this pandemic.

Lisa (proxy):

As for everyone quarantine as a new experience, and it takes a major adjusting to this lifestyle. I was definitely unprepared for the quarantine. Since I am deaf. When people wear a mask, it takes away the ability to lip read and communicate with people. I hate the idea of mask, but it protects people from being sick. I do not like to wear a mask because I feel claustrophobic. I started cooking more at home because I do not like to wait long lines at drive-throughs at any restaurants. I started to eat more healthy food instead of takeout every day. As for social distancing, I like the idea, and I hope it will continue after the reopening to keep from getting the flu or viruses from other people. I do not like to be close to people. So social distancing benefits me.

Jenny, PiAP:

This is sort of a hard thing. I'm wondering, um, what advice you might have for future generations who face something similar to this COVID-19 pandemic.

Lisa (proxy):

The most important advice is to wash your hands frequently and learn how to stay healthy by eating healthy foods, exercising and understanding the pathology of viruses and any diseases. Secondly, develop one or two hobbies that you can do at home. Thirdly, make sure that you have enough cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, and toilet paper. Do not hoard and learn to be considerate of older people,

especially elderly people. Teach people that wearing a mask is not for themselves, but to protect other people, such elderly people with immune systems, weak immune systems and people with immunosuppressed diseases or underlying medical conditions.

Jenny, PiAP:

What are you looking most forward to when, um, things move forward or when we have a vaccine. I'm wondering what you think the new normal will be.

Lisa (proxy):

I will appreciate going to work at my own office and to get out of my home. I have learned to appreciate what we have in society and what we took for granted. For instance, the malls, gyms, especially the libraries and parks. I believe that social distancing will be the new normal. Also many people learned how to Zoom and it would remain useful for gathering with friends and watch parties. One positive I hadn't thought about before is that more people are seeing interpreters on television and maybe are more aware of different communication needs. So that's a good thing coming out of this hard situation.

Jenny, PiAP:

Lisa, thank you so much for talking with us. We appreciate your perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lisa (proxy):

You're welcome.